A Pan-African Perspective on Apartheid, Torture, and Resistance in Euzhan Palcy's *A Dry White Season*

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Close-Up: Caribbean Cinema as Cross-Border Dialogue

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Abstract

This article starts from the premise that Euzhan Palcy's two films Rue cases nègres / Sugar Cane Alley *(1983) and* A Dry White Season *(1989) share a set of thematic equivalences that represent postcolonial perspectives on Pan-African identities and experiences. In both instances the film's focus is on the experiences of black communities and the atrocities they have suffered at the hands of their enslavers or oppressors. Through a detailed textual analysis of torture scenes in* A Dry White Season*, the article discusses how, despite its fictionality, the film is a form of documentation of police brutality in apartheid South Africa. The subjective points of view of characters who are victimized and tortured under apartheid, or who are witnesses to the torture of others, are key to this. The article concludes that the connectedness between these two films keeps alive histories of oppression across national and regional borders, which in turn invokes Pan-African imaginaries of resistance to ongoing and emergent forms of oppression.*

In an interview after the 2018 London Film Festival screening of the newly restored *Rue cases nègres* / *Sugar Cane Alley* (dir. Euzhan Palcy, 1983, Martinique), the film's director commented: "I would say very humbly with the making of *Sugar Cane Alley* I paved the way for the young and next generations of directors and actors so it was a very, very important moment in cinema history."[1] Palcy was born in Martinique in 1958, and after completing studies in Paris, first in literature at the Sorbonne and then in film at the Louis Lumière College, she returned to Martinique to direct *Rue cases nègres*, her first feature.

Rue cases nègres, an adaptation of Joseph Zobel's novel set in 1930s Martinique, tells the story of an orphan, José (Garry Cadenat), who lives with his grandmother, M'man Tine (Darling Legitimus), in a shantytown,

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next to the sugar cane plantation where she works. When he passes the school entrance examination, she joins José in the town, Fort-de-France, in order to support his education, looking after him and taking in laundry to pay for his fees. Among other characters is Médouze (Douta Seck), whose father was enslaved and whom José befriends. He instills in José the importance of ancestral history and a connection with Africa.

Palcy had wanted to be a filmmaker from the age of ten and had left with Zobel's novel in her suitcase for Paris, where she began to write the screenplay. This was to be her first major step into the world of filmmaking. Independently financed, the film won the Venice Film Festival's Silver Lion (1983) and the French César (1984) for Best First Film, as well as the FESPACO Ouagadougou Pan-African Film and Television Festival's Public Award (1985). Darling Legitimus won the Venice Film Festival's Volpi Cup for Best Actress (1983). There were further awards for the film, amounting to seventeen in total.

After *Rue cases nègres*, Palcy returned to France where she worked with French anthropologist Jean Rouch, one of the originators of cinema verité. Together they wrote, and Rouch directed, a comedy, *Dionysos* (1986, France), described by one critic as better "pass[ed] over with embarrassed haste. It's like a [19]60s hippy charging round the icon-scape of [19]80s Capitalism with a Super-8 camera and hoping meaning will accrue from the whir of disconnected imagery."[2] Despite this reception, Palcy's next major film, *A Dry White Season* (1989, United States), an adaptation of the South African writer Andre Brink's eponymous 1979 novel, was sponsored by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM). It tells the story of Ben du Toit (Donald Sutherland), an Afrikaans schoolteacher, who takes up the case of the school gardener, Gordon Ngubene (Winston Ntshona). Set in the context of the Soweto riots of 1976, his son, Jonathan (Bekhithemba Mpofu), has been detained and tortured by security police, and later dies in prison. When Ngubene embarks on a quest to find Jonathan's body, he himself is detained and tortured and subsequently dies in prison. Du Toit meanwhile undergoes a process of political awakening, partly as a result of the interventions of Stanley (Zakes Mokae), a Soweto taxi driver and a friend of the Ngubene family. Ultimately du Toit too will be murdered: Captain Stolz (Jurgen Prochnow), orchestrator and perpetrator of the violence against Jonathan and then Gordon Ngubene, will run him over in a final act of silencing.

Among Palcy's subsequent creative projects was a three-part documentary on the great Pan-African poet and theorist the Martinican Aimé Césaire, the first part of which was released in 1994. Though these two examples gesture toward the diversity of Palcy's film projects, deeper consideration suggests they are based on a set of thematic equivalences that represent postcolonial perspectives on Pan-African identities and experiences.

At its heart, *Rue cases nègres* is about slavery and the always present connection between Africa and the Caribbean.

It "locate[s] slavery as a social formation within an historical framework that speaks simultaneously to the past and to the present."[3] *A Dry White Season* extends this representation of slavery in *Rue cases nègres* to Apartheid South Africa, where, put simply, the disenfranchised black majority was held captive under Apartheid legislation in servitude to the minority white population. The historical link between black people of the Caribbean and of South Africa is thus reinforced. With *A Dry White Season*, Palcy may be seen then as addressing a post-nationalist or even post-regionalist (if we think of the Caribbean as a region) political agenda. However, consideration of the film in isolation does not necessarily reveal this overarching narrational continuity. Rather, it is when we deploy the idea of the *auteur* that we can see Palcy and her oeuvre in the light of a Pan-Africanist perspective. Taken from this viewpoint, the local manifestation of black resistance against Apartheid and its brutal repression—at a particular moment in South Africa—in *A Dry White Season* can be seen as an extension of relations between Africa and the Caribbean. As a Martinican, Palcy is heir to the same history and philosophical perspective as her countrymen Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Édouard Glissant. This is manifest in the way her cinematic works, whatever their geographical location, narrate a shared story of oppression. Whether the setting is plantation slavery in the Caribbean or Apartheid South Africa, the focus is on the experience of black communities, their oppression, and the atrocities they have suffered at the hands of their enslavers or oppressors.

This article, however, does not aim to tackle the director's entire oeuvre nor to draw comparisons between her different films so much as to use Palcy's first feature film, *Rue cases nègres* as an initial reference point for a discussion of *A Dry White Season*, her second. My rationale for this approach is twofold: first, it is based on the international success of the earlier film, which launched Palcy's filmmaking career at a very early age. Written and directed by a black Martinican woman and based on the adaptation of a Martinican author's novel, the film powerfully recreates the 1930s village setting and employs local actors in the main roles. Perhaps more germane to the theme of this Close-Up, it is one of the best-known and best-loved films of Caribbean cinema: a classic.

Second, Palcy's standing as a Pan-African filmmaker who is perceived as a protegée of Césaire,[4] suggests that *A Dry White Season* can fruitfully be discussed within a Pan-African context. According to June Givanni, for example, Palcy's "fiction feature films have embraced both Pan Africanism in scope and Negritude in aesthetics."[5] While the film's subject matter makes it comparable with others that depict the torture of detainees under Apartheid, such as *Mapantsula* (dir. Oliver Schmitz, 1988, South Africa) and films

produced following the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), it could thus also be viewed within a comparative framework alongside other films made in the same period (the late 1980s) that focus on black identity and experience, including the politics of Apartheid, across Africa and the African diaspora. These extended considerations, important as they are, fall beyond the focus of the present article.[6]

To begin on a personal note that positions me as a viewer, I had my first exposure to certain classics of black cinema as a film student at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in the early 1980s. A classroom screening of Ousmane Sembene's *Xala* (1972, Senegal) had already made a lasting impression on me when I first saw *Rue cases nègres* and I was deeply moved by it. I was struck by the way it represented the point of view of ordinary black people in a situation of exploitation and oppression, a rare cinematic visualization in itself. Even more of a rarity, the film was directed by a black female director. *A Dry White Season* was released six years later and was initially banned in South Africa. The banning was reversed on appeal, however, which is how I eventually came to see it. Like *Cry Freedom* (1987, United Kingdom/United States), a previous film about South Africa by a foreign director, Richard Attenborough, *A Dry White Season* was a Hollywood production. It nevertheless transcended Attenborough's achievement. Attenborough's film employs star actors: Kevin Kline, in the role of the key white character, Donald Woods, and Denzel Washington as the Black Consciousness Movement leader Steve Biko. Woods was a prominent political journalist and newspaper editor who befriended Biko. Following Biko's death in detention in 1977, he published a memoir, *Biko* (1978), and *Asking for Trouble: The Autobiography of a Banned Journalist* (1981), the two books on which Attenborough's film is based. Epic in style, particularly in its staging of Biko's funeral, the film is a powerful representation of a key moment in Apartheid history.

Though one could draw a parallel between the character of Woods and that of du Toit in *A Dry White Season*, the latter is a different type of film. Based on a novel, it does not purport to represent actual events, and du Toit is a fictional character. Despite this, *A Dry White Season* goes further in its representation of the atrocities of Apartheid, presenting several exposures of police brutality and scenes of torture. Crucially, the film adopts the strategy of representing the point of view of the black victims/survivors rather than only focusing on the middle-class, white hero-figure of du Toit. To this end, the film unties itself from the linear thrust of the plot and ventures into the hidden spaces of security police torture chambers. By loosening its perspectival thread from that of du Toit, and driving the plot forward outside of his point of view, it becomes, despite its fictionality, a form of documentation of

Apartheid atrocities visited on young black people in 1976, along with their parents and supporters, and other political prisoners. It also shows how du Toit ultimately becomes a victim himself, once he becomes an opponent of Apartheid and is killed by the vindictive security police captain, Stolz. The film thus performs a useful gesture in breaking down the black/white, good/evil binary on which Apartheid ideology was built, insisting instead on the necessity of collective responsibility and resistance.

The question of point of view is therefore crucial in these films. In *Rue cases nègres* the boy José's point of view is central to the film, providing the film's focal point. In *A Dry White Season* it shifts between characters: while in the light of its overall conventional narrative structure it sits mainly with du Toit, located between his workplace, the school, and his home, it moves outside of his purview to track the life of Ngubene, his wife Emily (Thoko Ntshinga), and their two sons, Jonathan and Robert (Tinashe Makoni), as well as the family friend and local taxi driver, Stanley and a lawyer friend, Julius (John Kani). This shift between the perspectives of du Toit and the Ngubene family dramatizes key oppositions in terms of racial difference and social space. Du Toit lives in a middle-class white suburb, drives a car, and teaches at a school for white boys. Ngubene lives in a modest township house in Soweto, uses public transport, and works as a gardener at du Toit's school and on occasion at his home. Du Toit is his benefactor in that he pays for his son, Jonathan's school fees. Ngubene "performs" a servile position to du Toit, as expected under Apartheid, calling him 'Mr. Ben', and it is Ngubene who makes the journey across the social and racial divide to work at the school where du Toit teaches. It is Ngubene who makes the move outside of the expectations of the work relationship between him and du Toit, by arriving with Jonathan to ask for help, after he has been whipped following his arrest. This act on Ngubene's part will ultimately call into question the predetermined parameters of their relationship under Apartheid.

A Dry White Season exposes the violence and horror of Apartheid in layers, beginning with Ngubene's son, Jonathan, and his whipping, then extending to police shooting at protesting schoolchildren, with the extent of their injuries made visible through close-up shots of their bodies lying in the mortuary, and ultimately through the scenes of torture. The machinations of the Apartheid state are always in view, whether through the exposure of divisions between domestic servants and their employers, for example, in the domestic space of the du Toit family home, or through police roadblocks when Stanley drives du Toit into Soweto, or the police helicopter flying overhead, as well as in the township scenes of police violence and the chaos it leaves behind. The film's attention to detail realistically reproduces

the politics and experience of the times, which acts as a powerful mise-en-scène for its visualization of police brutality in security police prisons.

Torture in *A Dry White Season*

In the thirty years since *A Dry White Season* was released, much has been officially revealed of the torture inflicted on detainees under Apartheid. Key to these revelations were the testimonies that emerged through the proceedings of the TRC, chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The South African Broadcasting Corporation's Special Report series beamed these into domestic homes on a weekly basis from April 1996, when the hearings began, to March 1998, and subsequently in the Special Assignment series from July 1998. Survivors and the families of victims, as well as perpetrators like Gideon Niewoudt and Eugene de Kock (a.k.a. 'Prime Evil'), became public figures whose dramatic stories exposed some of the worst horrors of Apartheid. Deaths in detention of anti-Apartheid activists such as Ahmed Timol and Neil Aggett have recently been reopened after decades of legal battles on the part of their families and loved ones. Timol was a thirty-year-old schoolteacher who was detained by the security police and who died by falling out of a tenth-floor window at the notorious John Vorster Square police station in central Johannesburg. In 2017, Judge Billy Mothle overturned the findings of the 1972 inquest and found that Timol had not committed suicide but had been pushed out of the window by the security police. Aggett, a medical doctor and trade unionist who died in detention in 1982 was found hanging in his cell after sixty-two hours of interrogation. These cases are reinvoking questions about the abuses of power of Apartheid's hegemonic forces, particularly the security police, and those who did not testify to the TRC and escaped prosecution.

The fact that *A Dry White Season's* daring visualization of police brutality under Apartheid came out five years prior to the official ending of Apartheid makes it all the more significant. The film draws attention to different instances of violence, beginning with Jonathan's whipping by the police after he is arrested at a political protest. This is revealed when Ngubene takes him to du Toit to ask for his help and shows him, in close-up, the still-raw lashings across his backside. This focus on individual characters and related plotlines quickly expands to present wider imagery of the political context, adopting the familiar footage of standoffs between demonstrating youth and police on the streets of Soweto. It uses very wide top shots to reveal protesting students amassing from all directions as well as low-angle shots with frames filled with children marching. These scenes reenact the events of June 16, 1976, when thousands of schoolchildren marched through Soweto

to protest the use of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in school. Police shot at them, injuring many and killing 176 children altogether in June alone. The film does not limit itself to sweeping perspectives, however, but also penetrates these wider crowd scenes through vignettes largely comprised of encounters between individuals and police. These create deeper views than the wider shots achieve. Not only that, but they are important for the fictional plot, since some of these include individual characters who are embedded within it. One of these is Jonathan, whom the police pick up when he stops to help another child whose young sister police have shot and killed. The film thus combines an epic shooting style with detailed revelatory moments, expanding the wider political framework while exposing individual characters's experiences.

But for all the film's work to present the political context of June 1976 it is the specific representations of torture that make the film, albeit a fictional one, a significant political achievement, not only personally for the director, Palcy, but also for Pan-African cinema history, in that connections between black experience in different parts of the world and in different periods ("slavery" then, "Apartheid" now) are reinforced. This achievement is all the more remarkable in the light of the film being Hollywood-sponsored, with its accompanying stylistic and aesthetic conventions and commercially driven imperatives. Palcy deploys the full extent of the Hollywood resources afforded her and the concomitant production values to represent the inner workings of the institutions of Apartheid and the violence they perpetuated.

After Jonathan disappears and his father begins searching for him and for anyone who might have seen him in custody, a young schoolboy, Wellington (Precious Phiri), with two arms in fresh plaster, arrives at the Ngubene home with an account of his period in detention and information about Jonathan. He is filmed in a medium close-up as he sits at the kitchen table, his arms laid out in front of him. "Two times," he says, "they put a wet bag on my head. You can't breathe *baba* [father], you think you're going to die. They never stopped, *baba*." The camera begins a slow zoom in, getting closer to Wellington's face. "They kept asking," he continues, "who are the ringleaders, but what can I tell them, I know nothing." The image cuts to a flashback of Wellington, in his school uniform, on a bench in a corner of a prison cell. As he continues in voice-over with a description of Jonathan next door screaming in Afrikaans, "Asseblief my baas, please my baas!" this memory sequence cuts to a shot of a door opening onto his cell. Light from the other room shines on Wellington as the image cuts to the feet of a policeman coming through the door, with Jonathan's cap lying on the floor behind him. Another pair of feet crosses the space and the door is closed. Cut to a medium shot of Wellington's terrified face, his eyeline matched to the spot where Jonathan's cap has been. The dramatic music on the soundtrack is interwoven with Jonathan's screams.

This scene firmly establishes, from Wellington's perspective, hunched up in the corner, that Jonathan is being tortured in the cell next door to him. The film returns to the Ngubene house, where Jonathan's father is listening intently. Unbeknown to him, Wellington's "wet bag" experience will become his fate also. The image cuts to a close-up of Wellington. He continues his exposition: "Everything went very quiet, and a man said 'Come on Ngubene, get up! Stop pretending!' [. . .] Later," he continues, "somebody said they took him to the hospital. I never saw him again." Wellington's verbal testimony in this scene is visually verified through the insertion of the memory sequence as a flashback represented cinematically from his point of view. It acts as a form of witnessing to Jonathan's torture both verbally and in physical detail. With Wellington's point of view inscribed within it, it becomes a claim to truth, much like documentary evidence. While Wellington's account would act as evidence in itself—as so many verbal accounts did, for example, when delivered before the TRC—the veracity of his testimony is more forcefully driven home by the additional layering that the flashback provides.

Even so, by being in flashback this scene is related at one remove, which means that the first scenes of Ngubene being tortured come as more of a shock to the viewer, especially as the point of view is initially that of Captain Stolz—the torturer. These scenes and the presentation of Ngubene's body in the coffin reveal not only the extreme violence of the security police but the fact that it is unchecked. When it comes to accounting for it and the deaths that ensue, the justice system upholds it, as the film's court scenes show. In short, the film underscores not only the fact that Apartheid's security police acted with impunity but how the courts and officials of justice supported this. In the lead-up to the first torture scene, du Toit visits the security police offices to enquire after Ngubene. The non-diegetic sound of the door closing as du Toit leaves the policeman's office stands in for the door that bangs on the scene of Ngubene's torture, framed in a wide shot. The clean, sudden cut to an image of brutal violence does not spare audiences. Ngubene is seated on a chair, a neon light above him, a chain tying his legs together, his hands tied behind his back. His shirt is drenched in blood, his head covered in a wet bag. This is not a scene of a white persecutor versus a black victim but is rather more complicated with the casting of a black collaborator. A black policeman to the left pulls back his head and pours more water over him; a white policeman to the right looks on, while Ngubene coughs and splutters inside the bag. "Come on you bloody bastard," the black policeman demands as he pulls back Ngubene's head, "who else has been feeding you this bullshit?"

There are footsteps on the soundtrack and Stolz's shoulder enters to the right of the frame. Cut to a reverse shot from Ngubene's point of view, with his head and shoulder in the foreground. Where the scene had begun

ostensibly devoid of point of view, as a form of fourth wall, theatrical staging, it now becomes clear that it is Stolz who has entered the torture chamber. The cut to a front view of Stolz from Ngubene's point of view, where he is centered in the frame, establishes a dyad based on power: Ngubene utterly powerless, Stolz all powerful. Stolz gestures for the bag to be pulled off and the black policeman pulls up the bag as the shot cuts on action to a front view of Ngubene in medium close-up. His battered face falls back, streaming with blood, the top of his chest also encrusted with blood. He gasps for breath. The shot cuts back to Ngubene's point of view, again the black policeman pulling back his head, Stolz framed from a low angle, further accentuating his power. "Why don't you answer, kaffir?" he asks, "who told you to collect the affidavits?"—a reference to Ngubene's secret attempts to prove that the police killed his son in detention.

A shot-reverse shot scenario in a conventional narrative structure would normally offer the shifting point of view of two people in dialogue with each other. But there is an irony in this instance, in that up to this point Ngubene is blinded first by the bag and then by his reeling and bloodied condition. If point of view relies on vision, the denial of Ngubene's matches his lack of agency not only in general terms as a black person under Apartheid but specifically as a victim of torture. His identity as a black person is in any event made complex by the presence and complicity of the black policeman. A high-angle shot follows Stolz's question. Ngubene is looking at Stolz, now off frame, the camera closer than before, revealing the full extent of the damage to his face, one eye blurred and bleeding, thick blood under his nose, around his mouth, and on his chest. He rasps painfully, "I want my son's body." His teeth are missing, his breathing seriously impaired. The image cuts back to an over-shoulder low-angle shot of Stolz. "Alright, kaffir," he says. Then, addressing the policemen, "Let's start again!"

The scene changes. Ngubene's wife, Emily, visits du Toit and shows him the teeth found in Ngubene's clothing when she collected it at the prison. This proves to be a key moment in the plot. Not only does it irrevocably convince him that Ngubene's certainty about his son's death had been correct from the start, but he calls Ian McKenzie (Marlon Brando), a lawyer, who agrees to see him and who will later represent Emily at her husband's inquest. This brief interlude adds another layer of physical verification of the torture, in the form of Ngubene's teeth. But it does not end there, and a further more violent scene follows. The camera is positioned at a low angle inside the room. Stolz enters the room and takes off his jacket. The sound of Ngubene groaning loudly overlays the image. Stolz walks forward, and sits down. The shot cuts on action to a wide shot as Stolz nudges Ngubene. He is in the foreground, trussed to a pole in the infamous "aeroplane" position: hanging facedown, his torso naked, his legs are bent at the knees so that his feet and hands are

tied together over the top of the pole, his body arching backward like a bow. Stolz's action causes him to swing slightly on the pole, as if he is merely an inanimate object, not human. "How do you feel today," asks Stolz, "ready to talk or ready to fly?" The black policeman pours water over him and his loud screams dominate the soundtrack. These two torture scenes closely following each other, separated by a short interlude that verifies the extent of the torture for the purposes of the plot, expose the variety of forms of brutal violence commonly in use in Apartheid jails.

There is a further important development at the end of the second torture scene. The shot cuts to a young black man, Johnson Seroke (Sello Maake), a messenger who comes through the door to deliver a file. Stolz looks back at him, and stands up, shouting, "Don't ever open that door without knocking." Looking shocked, Seroke departs, and the scene changes. But much later in the film, when du Toit, with Stanley, the taxi driver, and Julius, the Ngubene family's lawyer friend, are collecting affidavits as evidence of the security police torturing Ngubene to death, Seroke talks to Stanley and du Toit. Though he is unwilling to sign an affidavit—"It would be signing a death warrant"—he is willing to talk. As Seroke begins to explain what he saw, the image cuts to a flashback of the moment he (Seroke) walked into the room. The scene from earlier in the film when Seroke unwittingly opens the door and sees Ngubene is repeated, but this time the image cuts from Ngubene's view of Stolz looking back at the door, to the reverse shot of Seroke's point of view. Where previously the scene does not include this reverse shot, this is now included in a revisiting of Ngubene's torture at the hands of Stolz and his lackeys, thereby exposing what Seroke sees. The film thus puts to good use the strategy of shot-reverse shot so central to Hollywood's realism. This sequence, presented in flashback as Seroke's memory, not only duplicates the first scene of Ngubene's torture visually and aurally, but extends it much further by providing the reverse shot of Seroke's perspective, hence revealing the full extent of not only Ngubene's torture but its effect on him as a human being who, as a result of it, is facing certain death.

These scenes illustrate how Palcy uses subjective points of view to delay and conceal what she subsequently reveals, so as to provide a cumulative and forensically realist enactment of police brutality. Thus what follows is even more brutal than the earlier torture scene. The image, shot from the front, again shows Ngubene tied up in the "aeroplane" position, naked to his waist. But now he has electrodes attached to the back of his neck, with electric wires hanging down past his chest, connected to a box that a white policeman is manipulating. There is blood encrusted across his shoulders. His face is wet and covered in blood, eyes shut. He lifts his head screaming, looking up. He is unrecognizable, battered and red with blood. His eyes are blood red and

virtually hanging out of their sockets. The image cuts back to Seroke talking to du Toit and Stanley. "I heard he died that day," is all he says.

These expositions of torture in *A Dry White Season* can, since the TRC proceedings, be seen in relation to some of the testimonies presented to the commission by security police. For example, in the TRC report dealing with torture, Frank Bennetts, who had worked for the security police and who testified to the commission in 1996, described the method referred to as the "aeroplane" exactly as witnessed in *A Dry White Season*. Ironically his description includes a clear understanding of how the victim of torture would feel: "The result was similar to crucifixion. It pulled all your muscles. It closed up your chest. You couldn't breathe." But this knowledge is justified by the purpose and function of this form of torture in the first place: "Leave the guy there long enough, he's going to talk."[7] In the case of Ngubene, whose crime was to assert his claim on his son's body no matter the cost, this torture does lead to his death. As with so many others in Apartheid history, the police claim that Ngubene committed suicide.

Conclusion

Palcy's powerful representation of Apartheid in her second feature *A Dry White Season* raises important political issues. It creates a connection, a comparative equivalence, between histories of slavery and Apartheid, and their representation. This equivalence can be traced thematically, stylistically, and aesthetically in the films of Palcy as auteur. It might conceivably also be applied to works by different directors from varied regions in order more fully to extend the idea of a Pan-African world. This could facilitate new analytical and pedagogical possibilities in crossing borders that are not only geographical but also cultural. For example, the fact that a major Hollywood studio funded *A Dry White Season*, with established parameters with which Palcy had to contend, has not completely disabled the political component of her work. Indeed, the high production values made possible as a result of this sponsorship have in fact enabled a compelling cinematic work of international standing. Notwithstanding the compromises of Hollywood production, mainly in the form of the white male protagonist as the primary narrational agent, Palcy's determination to include local theater and film actors adds a significant level of authenticity. These include John Kani, Sello Maake, Thoko Ntshinga, Winston Ntshona, and Zakes Mokae, himself a political exile, as well as the young people playing the parts of schoolchildren. Equally, the attention to detail in the musical score led by Hugh Masekela, another political exile, that includes his at times magical, wistful, or dramatic

trumpet tones alongside the voices of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, intensifies the film's construction of South African reality from an anti-Apartheid perspective.

Brando (1924–2004), who appears as the larger-than-life figure Ian McKenzie, dominating court proceedings against the state, was an inspired choice on Palcy's part. Brando, one of the great American actors of the twentieth century, whose career spanned more than fifty years, played the lead in several Hollywood classics.[8] He reportedly performed the role of McKenzie for free and agreed to it after a period of eight years away from film acting. His full embrace of the role, and the film's homage to his performance style in the way he is framed, with his shoulders often stretching fully across the frame, matches his impertinence as the defense lawyer who is not afraid to criticize and to show his abhorrence for the Apartheid state and the legal scaffolding that holds it in place.

The enquiry that Palcy's *A Dry White Season* opens up can be added to the cinematic archive of the torture and murder of detainees in Apartheid's prisons, including other South African fiction films like *Mapantsula*, *Red Dust* (dir. Tom Hooper, 2004, United Kingdom), and *Zulu Love Letter* (dir. Ramadan Suleman, 2005, South Africa), which all use similar strategies of representation in recalling and visualizing Apartheid atrocities through characters' memories. Likewise, the documentary film *Between Joyce and Remembrance* (dir. Mark Kaplan, 2004, South Africa) uses fictional dramatizations to visually enact the torture of Siphiwo Mtimkulu, which Mtimkulu recorded in a written affidavit when he was briefly released from detention, before his disappearance. It was later revealed through the TRC that he had been assassinated by Gideon Niewoudt, a police captain in Port Elizabeth who assassinated several anti-Apartheid activists and was implicated in the death of Biko, leader of the Black Consciousness Movement, in 1977. These gruesome recollections are reminders of a traumatic past revisited in the present through cinema. If *Rue cases nègres*, that "very, very important moment in cinema history," as Palcy put it, recalls and records the connection between the Caribbean and Africa through the lived history of slavery, so *A Dry White Season* attends to the remnants of that legacy in one part of the continent in the form of Apartheid. The power of these cinematic records disallows forgetting. But more than that, their connectedness keeps alive histories of oppression that cross national and regional borders, and invokes Pan-African imaginaries of resistance to its ongoing and emergent forms.

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Notes

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1. See "Interview: Pioneering Director Euzhan Palcy of Sugar Cane Alley Film at 62nd BFI London Film Festival," Alt Africa, LSE Africa Summit, https://altafrica.com/2018/10/20/pioneering-director-euzhan-palcy-talk-as-sugar-cane-alley-screens-at-london-film-festival/.

2. Harlan Kennedy, "The Renaissance Ruled O.K.," American Cinema Papers, 1984, https://www.americancinemapapers.com/files/VENICE_1984.htm.

3. Michael T. Martin and David C. Wall, "The Politics of Cine-Memory: Signifying Slavery in the History Film," in *A Companion to the Historical Film*, ed. Robert A. Rosenstone and Constantin Parvulescu (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 447.

4. June Givanni (2015), http://www.junegivannifilmarchive.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/June-Givanni-Film-Notes-for-Autograph-Show-.pdf.

5. June Givanni (2015), http://www.junegivannifilmarchive.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/June-Givanni-Film-Notes-for-Autograph-Show-.pdf.

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6. For earlier scholarly discussions see Peter Davis, *In Darkest Hollywood: Exploring the Jungles of Cinema's South Africa* (Randburg, South Africa: Ravan Press, 1996); and Rob Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood: South African Culture and the World Beyond* (New York: Routledge, 1994). See also Vivian Bickford-Smith, "Reviewing Hollywood's Apartheid: *Cry Freedom* (1987) and *A Dry White Season* (1989)," *South African Historical Journal* 48, no. 1 (2003): 23–34.

7. Truth and Reconciliation Report, Volume 2, (1998), 192, http://sabctrc.saha.org.za/originals/finalreport/volume2/volume2.pdf. The report includes the description of the "wet bag" method by Jeffrey Benzien, a former security policeman, who also demonstrated it for the commission, on Tony Yengeni (MP), on whom he had used this method when he was in detention.

8. These include *A Streetcar Named Desire* (dir. Elia Kazan, 1951, United States), *On the Waterfront* (dir. Elia Kazan, 1954, United States), *Apocalypse Now* (dir. Francis Ford Coppola, 1972, United States), and *The Godfather* (dir. Francis Ford Coppola, 1979, United States). He also performed in the radical film *Queimada* / *Burn!* (dir. Gillo Pontecorvo, 1969, Italy). His character and performance are reminiscent of real-life, anti-Apartheid lawyers George Bizos and Sydney Kentridge, acting for the accused against the state in political trials.